

# The Bay Circuit Trail

DUXBURY HISTORY FILE  
REFERENCE



## *Bay Circuit Logo*

*You will find 4"x4" plastic markers with this logo along the entire BayCircuit Trail near road crossings, trail heads, junctions and occasionally at other trail locations as "confidence markers". Look for the markers on trees about six feet above the ground.*

## Trail Blaze

2"x6" white rectangular trail blazes mark the entire Bay Circuit Trail. The blazes are either painted or plastic, generally on live trees six feet above ground facing you as you hike the trail.

## Double Blaze

Two blazes with the upper blaze offset to the right or left indicate a change of trail direction. The double blaze shows a trail turn to the side of the trail it is on.

The grand vision of a single urban planner in the late 1920's is, at last, being realized. Charles Elliot II's prescient concept of a greenbelt ringing Boston from north to south shore has evolved into the Bay Circuit Trail. A 200 mile footpath through 50 communities, The Bay Circuit Trail will form a chain linking 79 areas of protected green spaces in an "Emerald Necklace" from Plum Island at Newburyport to Bay Farm in Duxbury. Thanks to the contribution of more than 30 cooperating towns, 120 miles of trail are now open to the public.

Serving as a catalyst to make the Bay Circuit dream come true is the Bay Circuit Alliance (BCA). Founded in 1990, the Alliance is a partnership of public and private organizations and individuals working to complete The Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway by the year 2000. BCA helps local communities establish, improve and maintain their portions of the Trail. It accomplishes this through planning and technical assistance to identify routes, protect land, and construct and manage trails. The Alliance also maintains contact with state and federal representatives and agencies to promote the Bay Circuit concept and consult on trail-related issues.

For more information visit their website, <http://www.serve.com/baycircuit> or contact Alan French, Chairman, Bay Circuit Alliance, 3 Railroad Street, Andover, MA 01801 (508-470-1982)

Nearing completion, The Bay Circuit Trail is clearly a crown jewel of the Commonwealth's recreational treasures.



*Bay Farm, in the foreground is the southern terminus of the Bay Circuit Trail.*

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[Click here to see more about the Bay Circuit Trail in Duxbury](#)

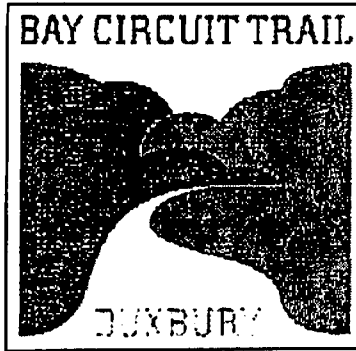
[Back to Duxbury Online](#)

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The Duxbury Open Spaces Committee gratefully acknowledges work generously contributed to the Duxbury Trail Demonstration Project by:

<b>Lans Bouthillier.....</b>	<b>Trail Sign Design</b>
<b>Chris Connors.....</b>	<b>Map Guide Design, Photography</b>
<b>Trevor Lloyd-Evans.....</b>	<b>Wildlife Inventory</b>
<b>John Holine.....</b>	<b>Trail Improvement Consultation</b>
<b>Bob Marconi &amp; Boy Scout Troop #62.....</b>	<b>Foot Bridge Construction</b>
<b>Mike DuPino, Mat Katz, Colin Nolan.....</b>	<b>Trail Clearing</b>
<b>Bill McArdle.....</b>	<b>Printing Specifications</b>
<b>Per Nylén.....</b>	<b>Map Guide Text</b>
<b>Bob Walsh &amp; Horse.....</b>	<b>Trail Blazing</b>

# The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury



*Duxbury Bay Circuit Logo*

*These distinctive 8"x8" signs on cedar posts mark all Bay Circuit Trail intersections with roads in Duxbury.*

Beginning in woodland at the westerly edge of Duxbury and ending past the open meadow of Bay Farm and at the edge of Kingston Bay, Duxbury's section of The Bay Circuit Trail is a rambling footpath through the local landscape. It offers both glimpses of its origins and an introduction to Duxbury's cultural history.

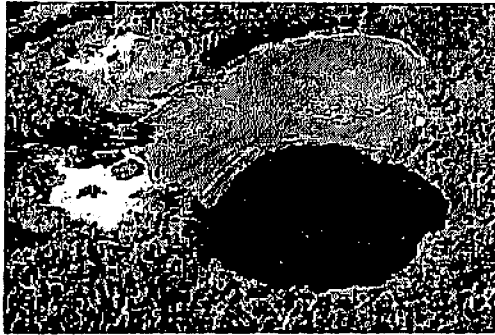
Land forms and forest cover in this area were shaped by the last great ice sheet to cover the region before it receded some 10,000 years ago. Soils developed from the glacial debris left behind. Upland areas consist mainly of well drained sand and gravel. The tree cover along the upland portions of the trail is mostly a white pine/red oak mixture adapted to these soils. The understory is low bush and dry land blueberry, ferns, sweetfern (in sandy openings), teaberry and ladyslipper. Where the trail dips to lower ground along streams and wetlands, the vegetation changes to red maple with alder, shadbush, hughbush blueberry, summersweet and native azalea.

None of the old growth forests found by early settlers has survived. During the 18th and 19th centuries, woodlands were heavily cut to build homes, farms, for fuel, bog iron production and shipbuilding. By the mid-1800's much of the Town had been cleared.

At the height of the shipbuilding era, lumber produced in local saw mills was hauled to Duxbury shipyards by long lines of ox teams. Often these teams stretched for more than a mile along the road. In all, over 643 ships were built in Duxbury shipyards. The last of them, the 700 ton bark the Thomas G. Goddard, was launched in 1874. Today's tree cover is relatively young forest which has, in less than a hundred years, re-claimed large areas of the Town.

Remains of early mills are still visible along the trail. Although there is some history

of wind powered mills in Duxbury, most were water powered. Most of the 40 or more ponds existing today were man-made for mills or cranberry farming.



*Round Pond, owned by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, is nearly surrounded by forest.*

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*Links to descriptions of Trail sections in Duxbury*

Valley Street to Summer Street (Route 53)

Summer Street (Route 53) to Union Bridge Road

Union Bridge Road to King Phillip's Path

King Phillip's Path to Vine Street

Mayflower Street to East Street

East Street to Elm Street

Elm Street to Bay Farm

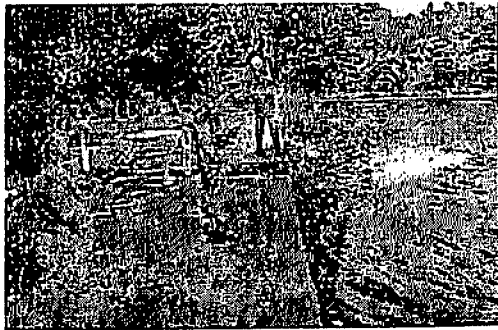
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# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury**

## **Valley Street to Summer Street (Route 53)**



*Easy to reach, Upper Chandler Pond is a nice destination for fishing and boating.*

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A pleasant pastoral view from the dam across Upper Chandler Pond focuses on the distant spire of the High Street United Methodist Church, built in 1867. Just off the trail to the right, stonework of the Holmes sawmill, which operated in the 1700's can still be seen where the pond flows into Pine Brook. The water level of the pond was raised in the mid 1940's to provide water for the development of cranberry bogs. Returning to the blazed trail, one can still make out the extensive tracery of abandoned irrigation canals and controls for a quarter mile along the trail.

After leaving the old cranberry meadow and passing through pine forest, the trail crosses Summer Street (Route 53), a heavily traveled two lane state highway. This road is built over an earlier "highway" used by settlers in 1685 to travel from Plymouth to Boston. For expediency, many of the early ways laid out by settlers followed Indian trails, and such appears to be the case here. Summer Street was known at various times as The Old Massachusetts Path, The Bay Path, and The King's Highway. It is one of the few highways which has remained essentially where it was when it was laid out over 300 years ago.

The country store near this intersection is a convenient stopping place for refreshments and supplies.

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# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury**

## **Summer Street (Route 53) to Union Bridge Road**

Leaving Route 52 the trail reenters a pine/oak woods before descending to and following Phillip's Brook downstream to the site of one of the last mills built in Duxbury; Howland's gristmill which operated in the mid 1800's. Dependable flows of water in streams dammed for early mills could not always be relied upon and operators often excavated extensive "ditches" into adjacent watersheds to augment water flow during dry periods. One such excavation is located a short way upstream from the mill site. The ditch was excavated by hand and lined with cobble stones for a distance of a quarter mile to draw water from Black Friar Swamp. A short side trip along this ditch bears witness to the effort required for this excavation and reminds us of the determination needed for early survival. The mill was later used as a sawmill by the Lot Phillips Company and still later the stream was developed as a trout fish farm. Remains of the wooden weirs in the brook are still visible upstream of the original mill site.

Birds that reside in this area year round include the Mourning Dove, Downey Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch.



*Upper Chandler Pond provides a nice spot for a picnic or rest.  
The view includes the High Street Methodist Church in the distance.*

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# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury**

## **Union Bridge Road to King Philip's Path**

Crossing Union Bridge Road, the trail continues eastward entering a pine forest through a blueberry patch. Soon it turns south, descending steeply to a small creek. The trail then climbs gently before emerging at King Philip's Path.



*Along the trail are many stopping points  
for rest and reflection.*

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# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury**

## **King Philip's Path to Vine Street**

After heading north for about 150 feet on King Philip's Path the trail turns east onto an old cart path. On leaving the cart path it turns southeast into light forest, briefly paralleling the remains of a stone wall. Leaving the stone wall remains, the trail bends back eastward under a white pine canopy with sparse undergrowth. In small clearings young pines and oaks have begun to establish themselves. Before long the trail crosses a wide clearing under two power lines. It continues past a cottage on a short cart path to Vine Street.

This short and level section is ideal for those with limited walking ability or little time to enjoy the trail.



*Many sections of the trail will bring you past water,  
across fields, and through the woods.*

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# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury**

## **Mayflower Street to East Street**

After crossing King Philip's Path, Vine Street, and Union Bridge Road and following Chandler, Vine, and Mayflower Streets for short distances, the trail enters woodland. Shortly thereafter it follows the right shoreline of a small pond and a ridge of land, called an esker (D), on the left. The trail follows the esker for three quarters of a mile, crossing it where it has been leveled to provide sand for the cranberry bog.

An esker is a long meandering deposit of sand and gravel left by a stream formed by a retreating glacier. Although this esker is interrupted in several places by borrow pits, it is an impressive example of this glacial land form. In the summer the woodlands here offer opportunities for sighting Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree and Barn Swallows, Hermit Thrush and Red-eyed Vireo. In the winter Red-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Sharp-shinned Hawks can be seen.



*Canoeing on Pine Lake, a great way to view wildlife.*

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# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury East Street to Elm Street**

After crossing over Route 3 the trail enters land owned by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, whose holdings here include Round Pond, acquired in 1891. To the west of Round Pond is Pine Lake. During the summer one should look for Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Mallards, and Wood Ducks along the shorelines. In the winter Buffleheads, American Black Ducks and Ring-necked Ducks can be spotted in here. Running along the southerly shore of Pine Lake and crossed by the Bay Circuit Trail just southeast of the Lake, is a woodland trail shown on older maps as "Old Meetinghouse Road". The meetinghouse of early Duxbury was the center of religious, government and community activity. This trail provided access for settlers from outlying sections to the meetinghouse which was located adjacent to the Old Burying Ground, about two miles east of this intersection. The Bay Circuit Trail borders a cranberry bog for a short distance before intersecting Tobey Garden Street at the village of Tinkertown. One of these bogs is owned by the Town of Duxbury and leased to a cranberry grower. Off the trail to the east of the intersection, Bog Iron Creek, also known as Island Creek, passes under the roadway. Bog iron was a valuable natural resource and its discovery here and elsewhere in Duxbury made possible the local manufacture of implements vital to early life. Iron cook pots and tools were so treasured as to be items of inheritance in wills along with buildings and other valuables. Bog iron was dug from shallow pond bottoms and swamps, such as this one between the roadway and Island Creek Pond.

Just across the road and downstream a short distance is the site of another early mill, authorized by Town meeting in 1702 and operated as a sawmill until 1845. Dam abutments and the mill foundation are still visible. Nearby you can see the outcrop of Westwood granite from which the foundation stones were quarried.

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*The granite outcrop of Bay Farm is a wonderful spot to watch the sun rise over Kingston Bay.*

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Back to The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury



# **The Bay Circuit Trail - Duxbury Elm Street to Bay Farm**

Returning to the blazed trail, The Bay Circuit Trail then follows School and Oak Streets south to a crossing of Route 3-A. At this intersection there is another country store at which sandwiches, cold drinks and other supplies can be found. The trail continues along Park Street. From the intersection with 3-A, Park Street follows along the route of three old highways which converged from the north and west as they approached and crossed the Jones River; Green's Harbor Path (1623), The Duxborough Trail (1637) and the Bay Path (1685). The trail then branches left from Park Street onto Loring Avenue and Bay Road to its end around the Bay Farm meadow to the granite outcropping on the shore of Kingston Bay.

In the Bay Farm meadow one is likely to see Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Baltimore Orioles, and Eastern Towhees. All of these have been observed nesting at Bay Farm. In the winter Purple Finches, Pine Siskin, American Tree and White-Throated Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos frequent the meadow. The meadow mowings are scheduled to provide nesting sites and food sources for eastern Massachusetts field birds. This type of field management also provides excellent habitat for the Shorttail Shrew and Meadow Vole.

The Court Grants in Duxbury (laid out according to the Second Land Division of 1627) began at the mouth of the Jones River and extended around the Bay. The first 20 acre grant north of the River was to Joseph Rogers, the next to Joseph Wadsworth and the third to Steven Tacey. All three farms were bought in 1703 by Thomas Loring who named the whole area the "Bay Farm". It is believed to have been cultivated continuously since the 1600s.

From the vantage point of a Westwood granite outcrop on the Bay Farm shoreline (G) much of historic significance is in view. Straight out in the distance, slightly southeast, lies the Duxbury Pier Light, a sparkplug lighthouse locally known as "Bug Light". It marks the entrance to Plymouth, Duxbury, and Kingston Bays. To the left of this lighthouse lies "Saquish", a low stretch of land with cottages strung out along the beach. In the background (behind the cottages) is Gurnet Light. There was a lighthouse at Gurnet Point as early as 1768 and a fort at Gurnet in 1776. It was reactivated in 1812. In 1863 new forts were built by the Navy on Gurnet and Saquish. In front of Gurnet Lighthouse is a large house facing an open field. It is on

Clark's Island, named after the first mate of the Mayflower, Thomas Clark. It was the sheltering place for a party of Pilgrims. Caught in a storm while exploring the shoreline in their shallop, they took refuge here, on Clark's Island, and spent the next day drying their clothes and equipment. Then, on the Sabbath, Sunday December 17, 1620 the Pilgrims held their first religious service in the new world, at what is now called Pulpit Rock. The next day they began to explore the shoreline of the bay for a good place to settle..

A little further to the left and around the corner from the wooden pier jutting into Duxbury Bay are the remains of Myles Standish's homestead, the "Standish cellarhole". Captain Standish, the military protector of those who arrived on the Mayflower, brought his family across from Plymouth in 1628 and lived here until his death in 1656. Still further to the left and easily found by the tall monument on top, is Captain's Hill. Although known as Captain's Hill from early times, Captain Standish owned only half way up the eastern side. The top of the hill and all land to the west was held by the Town as common land until the 1700's. From earliest times the Hill has been a lookout point. Here, reportedly, beacons were readied for lighting in the Indian and Revolutionary Wars, and the War of 1812.



*With saltmarsh, field, and forest, there is  
always something exciting to explore at Bay Farm.*

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The monument, 116 feet high, was completed (after interruptions) in 1889. Ground had been broken years earlier. The railroad to South Duxbury was rushed to completion to bring a crowd of 10,000 people to the cornerstone ceremony in 1872. The Hill was still bare when the monument was being built, with cattle pastured on its slopes. Today it is completely wooded, a State Reservation with picnic tables

among the pines, managed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management.

Coastal shorebirds seen in summer from this vantage point include: Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little blue Heron, Laughing Gull, Roseate, and Common and Least Tern. American Black Duck, Brants, Common Eider, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser can be seen in the winter.

Directly off to the right, several hundred yards down the shore is the mouth of the Jones River. When the Pilgrims explored Kingston Bay shortly after their arrival they "found a creek and went up three English miles. They described it as, " a very pleasant river...this place we had a great liking to plant in, but that it was so far from our fishing, our principal profit, and so encompassed with woods that we should be in much danger of the savages, and our numbers being so little, and so much ground to clear so we thought good to quit.." After considering the Jones River for their settlement the Pilgrims decided to settle at Plymouth, closer to fishing and Town Brook, a source of fresh water.

The River, named for Christopher Jones, captain of the Mayflower, served a shipbuilding industry (a hundred years later) that built 270 ships; many of 100 tons and some as large as 600 tons. Today, a short distance up the River at the "Landing", is a small boat storage and repair yard operating at this boat building location since 1713.

As the landscape along the trail has changed over the past several hundred years, so has the Bay and its shoreline. Marshland has encroached upon creeks, inlets and bays. As you stand gazing across this quiet bay, its shoreline dotted with houses and pleasure boats bobbing at their moorings, image that scarcely a century ago this was a place of vigorous ship building and bustling commerce.

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